time to obtain clarity on these issues, after which, if required, an agreement would be negotiated.

Maintenance clause in International Pipeline Projects

2901. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have scheduled a Working Group Meeting with Pakistan on the Iran Pipeline to discuss Risk Mitigation in August, 2005;

(b) what are the expected items which will be discussed with regard to risk mitigation;

(c) whether Government will study and raise the issue of having special courts to deal with humanitarian issues arising out of commercial activity;

(d) whether it is fact that pipeline maintenance would require mutual travel by workers and engineers; and

(e) the steps proposed to review the existing consular practices in relation to mega pipeline projects?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Taking into account the various political and security-related issues pertaining to the pipeline, India's over-riding objective is to achieve a "safe and secure world class project", as stated in the Joint Press Statement issued in Islamabad on 7.6.2005 by the Petroleum Ministers of India and Pakistan, the relevant extracts being at Statement (*See* below). As stated in this Press Statement, a Joint Working Group (JWG) has been constituted at the Secretary-level to meet regularly and review the progress. The first meeting of the India-Pakistan JWG was held in New Delhi on 12-13 July 2005. Both sides conveyed their serious commitment to address various issues pertaining to the project and agreed that once basic issues pertaining to the project had been satisfactorily resolved between the three countries concerned, they would enter into a "Framework Agreement". The two sides also agreed on the crucial importance of urgently appointing their respective financial advisory consortia to advise on the project structure and related

technical, financial, commercial and legal matters with a view to mitigating risks and ensuring a "safe and secure world class project" on the basis of international best practice. The advisers are expected to submit their reports to the Governments concerned later this year, on the basis of which Government will take a considered view about the structure of the project as also the nature and extent of our participation in it. Since the proposed project would be conceived and developed on the basis of international best practice, its viability and security would be founded on consensual and legally enforceable agreements in line with established international precedents, between the various national and commercial parties concerned, all of which taken together would have the intended effect of mitigating risk. The next meeting of JWG is likely to be held in Pakistan in September, 2005.

(c) to (e) The pipeline proposal is at initial stage of discussion. These issues would be addressed at appropriate time.

Statement

Relevant extracts from the Joint Press Statement issued by the Petroleum Ministers of India and Pakistan in Islamabad on 7.6.2005

Iran-Pakistan-India Pipeline: The two Ministers reviewed the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipelines proposal. They agreed that the project, which envisaged supply of gas to Pakistan and India through a transnational pipeline, would go a long way in meeting the energy security requirements of the two countries and, thus, should be seen as a significant project for the benefit of the people of these countries. The Indian and Pakistani delegations agreed to exchange information in regard to the financial structuring, technical, commercial, legal and related issues to realize a safe and secure world class project. To this end, it was agreed that the momentum pertaining to the project should be accelerated by constituting a Joint Working Group at the Secretary-level, which will meet regularly and report progress to the Ministers to facilitate definitive decisions by them, at the earliest.

Exploration of coal bed methane

2902. SHRI CHITTABRATA MAJUMDAR: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state: